

POLICY GUIDE FOR PROVIDING MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO PROGRAMS TO LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PERSONS

Effective Immediately

Introduction

It is the policy of the Housing Authority of Clackamas County (HACC) to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to HACC programs and activities by limited English proficient (LEP) persons, taking into account the proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population, the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program, the nature and importance of the service provided by the program, and the available resources.

For the purposes of this plan, HACC defines a “program” as follows:

1. Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV)
2. Public Housing
3. Shelter Plus Care
4. Jannsen Road Transitional Housing
5. HCV Family Self-Sufficiency

Definition of LEP Person

Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be LEP.

Identifying LEP Individuals who Need Language Assistance

HACC shall take reasonable steps to identify LEP persons served or encountered using the following methods:

- Using the Census Bureau Language Identification Flashcards to invite LEP persons to identify their language needs to staff; these cards will be available at all HACC offices and application locations.
- Posting notices in all HACC offices and application sites listing commonly encountered languages and notifying LEP persons of available language assistance;
- Requesting applicants residents and participants to list their primary language and need for interpreter on applications and eligibility statements;
- Tracking the LEP information electronically in HAB;

Language Assistance Measures

Types of Language Services Available

HACC shall take reasonable steps to provide oral and written language services as described in this section. In determining what language services should be provided, HACC shall consider the following factors:

A. The number or Proportion of LEP Persons Served or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population

HACC shall examine its prior experiences with LEP encounters to determine the breadth and scope of language services needed. HACC shall also consult other data to refine or validate its prior experience, including the latest census data for the area served. Effectively immediately, HACC will update applications to identify LEP persons and track in HAB LEP families served for future review of persons served.

B. The Frequency LEP Individuals Come Into Contact With the Programs

HACC shall take reasonable steps to assess, as accurately as possible, the frequency of contact with LEP persons from different language groups. Each month, HACC front office staff will document encounters with LEP persons using U.S. Census Bureau flashcards. The more frequent the contact with a particular language group, the more likely that enhanced language services in that language are needed. Less frequent contact with different language groups may suggest a different and less intensified solution.

C. The Nature and Importance of the Program, Activity, or Service provided by the Program

The more important the activity, information, service, or program, or the greater the possible consequences of the contact to the LEP persons, the more likely language services may be needed.

D. The Resources Available to HACC and Costs

While it is HACC's policy to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to HACC programs and activities by LEP persons, the availability of resources may limit the provision of language services in some instances. "Reasonable steps" may cease to be reasonable where the costs imposed substantially exceed the benefits. HACC shall explore the most cost-effective means of delivering competent and accurate language services before limiting services due to resource concerns.

Oral Language Services (Interpretation)

HACC shall use contract interpreters and bilingual HACC staff to provide the services. Where LEP persons so desire, they can use, at their own expense, an adult interpreter of their own choosing (whether a professional interpreter, family member, or friend) in place of or as a supplement to the free language services offered by HACC. HACC may, at its discretion, choose to provide their own Interpreter in addition to the one used by the family.

HACC shall take reasonable steps to ensure competency of the language service provider. When providing oral language assistance, HACC shall use the following general criteria to ensure effective communication with LEP persons:

- Demonstrated proficiency in and ability to communicate information accurately in both English and in the other language and identify and employ the appropriate mode of interpreting;
- Knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts peculiar to HACC's program or activity and of any particular vocabulary and phraseology used by the LEP person;
- Understanding of and following confidentiality and impartiality rules;
- Awareness of "regionalisms" used by the LEP person;
- Understanding of and adherence to their role as interpreters without deviating into a role as counselor, legal advisor, or other roles.

When interpretation is needed and is reasonable, it shall be provided in a timely manner so as to avoid the effective denial of a benefit or service. Where access to or exercise of a benefit or service is not effectively precluded by a reasonable delay, the language assistance may be reasonably delayed.

Written Language Services (Translation)

HACC shall take reasonable steps to provide written translations of vital documents that list program rules and instructions for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000 persons, whichever is less, of program applicants/participants/residents. Whether or not a document (or information it solicits) is vital may depend upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved, and the consequence to the LEP person if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner. For example, applications for certain recreational activities would not generally be considered vital documents, whereas applications for housing could be considered vital.

All documents that require action from an applicant or participant shall include a statement in the languages of eligible groups reading "Important information about your housing! If you need assistance, please contact us immediately." HACC shall take reasonable steps to provide oral interpretation of other documents, if needed.

For all documents available in the languages of eligible groups, the English version of the documents shall include a statement on the bottom in the languages of eligible groups reading "This form is available in (language) upon request."

For LEP language groups that constitute less than of program applicants, participants or residents, HACC will not translate written materials, but shall take reasonable steps to provide oral interpretation of the written materials upon request.

As with oral interpreters, HACC will take reasonable steps to ensure competency of translators of written documents. Where legal or other vital documents are involved, HACC shall make a reasonable effort to use certified translators.

Telephone Services

When calls are received by an LEP applicant, participant or resident, HACC staff will make every effort to determine the language being spoken by the caller. Calls will be forwarded to HACC staff who speak the same language as the caller for assistance.

If HACC staff are not available at the time of the call, the caller will be requested to call back when an interpreter can be available and given the phone number of the HACC contracted telephone interpretative service. An interpreter will be secured within a reasonable time frame.

On-Site Visitors

When an LEP applicant, participant or resident comes to a HACC office, HACC staff will make every effort to determine the language being spoken by the caller by using the U.S. Census Bureau's Language Identification Flashcards. If HACC staff who speak the language are available to assist the applicant, participant or resident, they will do so, either in person or via telephone.

If HACC staff are not available at the time of the visit, the person will be requested to come back when an interpreter can be available. An interpreter will be secured within a reasonable time frame.

Written Communications

Correspondence received in languages other than English will be translated by HACC staff who speak the language, where available, or by HACC's contracted translation agency. Responses will be translated into the same language as the letter that was received.

Training Staff

HACC will ensure that staff knows the obligation to provide meaningful access to information and services to LEP persons. HACC will provide training to ensure that:

- Staff is competent on LEP policies and procedures; and
- Staff having contact with the public is trained to work effectively with interpreters.

The training will be included as a part of departmental orientation for new employees.

Staff will be provided with listing of forms available in languages other than English, bilingual HACC staff and contact numbers for interpretative services contracted for by HACC.

Providing Notice to LEP Persons

HACC shall provide a notice to LEP persons of the availability of free language assistance that ensures meaningful access to HACC's programs and services. Examples of notification may include:

- Posting signs in common areas, offices, and anywhere applications are taken. The signs shall be translated into the most common languages encountered;
- Stating in outreach documents that language services are available. These statements shall be translated into the most common languages encountered;
- Working with grassroots and faith-based community organizations and other stakeholders to inform LEP persons of HACC's services, including the availability of language assistance services;

Monitoring and Updating LEP Plan

HACC will monitor the implementation of the LEP plan on an ongoing basis to determine whether new documents, programs, services, and activities need to be made accessible for LEP persons. In addition, HACC will review its LEP plan annually to evaluate the following information:

- Proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population;
- Frequency of encounters with LEP language groups;
- Nature and importance of activities to LEP persons;
- Availability of resources;
- Whether existing language assistance meets the needs of LEP persons;
- Whether staff knows and understands LEP plan and its implementation.

Addendum to Plan

As of March 1, 2007, following information applies to HACC's programs.

	Section 8	Shelter Plus Care	Public Housing	Transitional Housing	FSS
Languages Exceeding 5% of Population	Russian Spanish	None	Russian Spanish		
Languages Applications Currently Translated Into	Russian Spanish		Russian Spanish		
Languages Forms Currently Translated Into	Russian Spanish	None	Russian Spanish		
Language Flashcards	Yes		Yes		Not Applicable
Interpreter Signs Posted	Yes		Yes		Yes
Staff Interpreters Available	Russian Spanish		Russian Spanish		Russian Spanish
Protocol in Place for LEP Callers	Yes		Yes		Yes
Protocol in Place for LEP Visitors	Yes		Yes		Yes
Staff Training on Working with Interpreters	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Listing of Forms Available in Spanish or Russian

<u>Name of Form</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>	
Adding a member		X	Annual Re-exam Ltr-
PH X	X		
Annual Re-exam Ltr-Sc8	X		
*Annual Review of Income PH	X	X	
Applicant/Tenant Certification	X	X	
*Approval of Request for Reasonable Accommodation		X	
*Asset Self Certification	X	X	
Brochure	X	X	
*Child Care Verif	X	X	
Choice of Rent	X	X	
Cleaning Check List			
Community Service	X	X	(submitted 11/7/07 for completion)
Contract Sec8 Cert	X	X	
Dangers of Lead Based Paint	X		
Declaration of Immigration	X	X	
*Denial of Request for Reasonable Accommodation	X		
*Earned Income Verif	X	X	
Explanation of How to Recycle	X		
Family Self-Sufficiency Program	X	X	
*Federal Privacy Act	X	X	
*Fraud Letter	X	X	
*Good News Letter PH	X	X	
Fraud Warning	X	X	
Good News Letter MR			
Good News Letter Sc8			
* Inactive Denial Letter	X	X	
*Income Asset Explanation	X	X	
*Informal Hearing Procedure	X	X	
Lead Based Paint	X	X (booklet)	
Lease Public Housing	X	X	
Lease Vou			
*Lease Riders PH	X	X	
Left without Proper Notice		X	
*Northwest Pest Control	X	X	
*Notice of Availability of Reasonable Accom(PH & pre app)	X	X	
*Notice of Availability of Reasonable Accom(SC8)	X	X	
504 Needs Letter		X	
Notice of Ineligibility		X	
Notice of Intent to Vacate		X (ltr. & form)	X (form)
Over Income		X	
Owes Money to Another HA		X	
Owes Money to HACC		X	
*Pre -App	X	X	
Privacy Act Notice	X	X	
Receipt Letter (of Pre App)		X	
*Rent Adjustment PH	X	X	
Rental Agreement	X	X	
Rental Assistance LTR W/preap	X		
*Request for Additional Info or Verif re: Reasonable Accommodation	X		
*Request for a Meeting	X		

Sec 8 Waitlist Closed		X
Security Deposit Refund	X old	X old
*Self-employment Form	X	X
*Tenant Request for Waiver	X	X
<u>Name of Form</u>	<u>Russian</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
Social Security Letter	X	X
Tenant Authorization	X	X
Utility Allowance Letter		X
Verif Immig Status	X	
Violence Against Women Notice	X	X
Voucher	X	X
*Zero Income	X	X
* form newly translated and received		

FORMS WE SENT TO BE TRANSLATED FOR RECERT PACKETS

RUSSIAN

- #1 Voucher
- #79 Family Self Sufficiency Letter
- #8 Authorization
- #50 Choice of Rent

SPANISH

- #1 Voucher
- #33 Applicant/Tenant Certification
- #8 Authorization
- #50 Choice of Rent
- #66 Notice of Reasonable Accommodation
- #15 Notice of Reasonable Accommodation
- # 79 Family Self-Sufficiency